

Amendments to the Claims: This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A tripod ~~(1)~~ for supporting apparatus in general and, in particular, for optical or photographic apparatus ~~and the like~~, comprising:

a spider ~~(2)~~, having a through-hole formed through the spider;

a pillar having a stem with first and second ends and being (8) arranged to be housed slidably with ~~a~~the stem ~~(7)~~ thereof in ~~a~~the through-hole ~~(6)~~ formed through the spider ~~(2)~~; and

a head ~~(4)~~ arranged for adapted to receiveing the apparatus, the head ~~(4)~~ being connected to ~~a~~the first end ~~(7a)~~ of the ~~stem~~ pillar ~~(8)~~, characterized in that, in the closed-up condition, that is, in the most compact condition of the tripod ~~(1)~~, the head ~~(4)~~ is and being at least partially housed inside the through-hole ~~(6)~~ when the tripod is in its fully retracted and most compact condition.

2. (Currently Amended) ~~The~~A tripod according to ~~c~~Claim 1, further comprising means for adjusting the orientation of the head ~~(4)~~, the adjustment means being fixed to ~~the~~a second end ~~(7b)~~ of the stem ~~(7)~~, axially remote from the first end ~~(7a)~~.

3. (Currently Amended) ~~The~~A tripod according to ~~c~~Claim 1 ~~or Claim 2~~ in which the head comprises a spherical element ~~(15)~~ and a collet ~~(19)~~ housed inside the stem ~~(7)~~ in the region of the first end ~~(7a)~~, the collet ~~(19)~~ ~~being active on~~engaging the spherical element ~~(15)~~ in order to clamp it selectively, relative to the stem.

4. (Currently Amended) ~~The~~A tripod according to ~~c~~Claim 3 in which the head ~~(4)~~ further comprises a ring nut ~~(17)~~ mounted on the spherical element ~~(15)~~ and such that, when the tripod ~~(1)~~ is in the ~~closed-up~~ fully retracted condition, the ring nut ~~(17)~~ is in abutment with the spider ~~(2)~~ and the spherical element ~~(15)~~ is housed inside the through-hole ~~(6)~~.

5. (Currently Amended) ~~The~~A tripod according to ~~c~~Claim 3 ~~or Claim 4~~, further comprising a sleeve ~~(21)~~ with a frustoconical opening ~~(22)~~, driven into the first end ~~(7a)~~ of the

stem (7), the collet (19) being housed inside the sleeve (21) and cooperating with the frustoconical opening for the clamping of the spherical element.

6. (Currently Amended) TheA tripod according to ~~one or more of c~~Claims 3 to 5 2 in which the head comprises a spherical element and a collet housed inside the stem in the region of the first end, the collet engaging the spherical element in order to clamp it selectively, relative to the stem, and the means for adjusting the orientation of the head (4) comprises a tie rod (23) having first and second ends and being associated, by means of via athe first (23a) of its ends, with the collet (19) in order, when tensioned, to lock the relative rotation of the spherical element (15) inside the collet (19).

7. (Currently Amended) TheA tripod according to cClaim 6 in which the means for adjusting the orientation of the head (4) further comprises a knob (27) in abutment with the second end (7b) of the stem (7), the tie rod (23) being disposed inside the stem (7) and being connected, ~~by means of a~~via the second (23b) of its ends, to the knob (27), for the adjustment of the tensioning of the tie rod (23).

8. (Currently Amended) TheA tripod according to cClaim 7 in which the knob (27) comprises a female thread (30) and in which the second threaded end (23b) of the tie rod (23) is threaded and is engaged ~~the female thread~~ by screwing, so that rotation of the knob (27) varies the tensioning of the tie rod (23) and consequently the clamping of the collet (19) onto the head (4).

9. (Currently Amended) TheA tripod according to ~~cClaim 6 or Claim 8~~ in which the means for adjusting the orientation of the head (4) further comprises a guide bush (25) driven into the second end (7b) of the stem (7), the tie rod (23) being guided in the guide bush (25) in a non-rotatable manner.

10. (Currently Amended) TheA tripod according to ~~one or more of c~~Claims 6 to 9 7 further comprising in which axial preloading means are provided on the tie rod (23), so that the tie rod (23) is tensioned, even when the knob (27) is fully slackened, ensuring a minimal clamping of the collet (19) onto the spherical element (15).

11. (Currently Amended) TheA tripod according to cClaim 10 in which the means for adjusting the orientation of the head further comprises a guide bush driven into the

second end of the stem, the tie rod being guided in the guide bush in a non-rotatable manner, and the preloading means comprises a spring resilient means (31) interposed between the tie rod (23) and the guide bush (25).

12. (Currently Amended) TheA tripod according to ~~one or more of the preceding~~ claims 1, further comprising means for locking the sliding of the pillar (8), the locking means including a brake (9) acting on the pillar (8).

13. (Currently Amended) TheA tripod according to claim 12 in which the brake (9) comprises an operating lever (10) terminating in a cam-like eccentric element (11) operating on a pad (12) movable radially in a seat formed in the spider (2) in a manner such that the pressure of the pad (12) on the pillar (8) is determined by the position of the operating lever (10).

14. (Currently Amended) TheA tripod according to ~~one or more of the preceding~~ claims 1 ~~in which each of the further comprising~~ legs (3) ~~is each~~ articulated to the spider (2) by a respective first section (3a), ~~by means of a~~ respective appendage (34) projecting radially from an end of the first section (3a), without occupying space inside the section (3a).

15. (Currently Amended) TheA tripod according to claim 14 in which the appendage (34) is formed integrally on a sleeve (40) fitted firmly on the first section, each appendage (34) being housed in a respective seat (36) formed in the spider for the articulation of the leg (3).

16. (Currently Amended) TheA tripod according to claim 15 in which the appendage (34) and the seat (36) are provided with respective complementary restraining means for restraining axially by means of which the appendage, while allowing the appendage to (34) is rotatable, but restrained axially in the seat (36).

17. (New) A tripod for supporting apparatus in general and, in particular, for optical or photographic apparatus, comprising:

a spider having a through-hole formed through the spider;

legs each articulated to the spider by a respective first section, a respective appendage projecting radially from an end of the first section, without occupying space inside the section;

a pillar having a stem with first and second ends and being housed slidably with the stem in the through-hole formed through the spider;

means for locking the sliding of the pillar, the locking means including a brake acting on the pillar;

a head adapted to receive the apparatus, the head being at least partially housed inside the through-hole when the tripod is in its fully retracted and most compact condition and the head having a spherical element and a collet housed inside the stem in the region of the first end of the stem, the collet engaging the spherical element in order to clamp it selectively, relative to the stem, so that the head is connected to the first end of the stem; and

means for adjusting the orientation of the head, the adjustment means being fixed to the second end of the stem, axially remote from the first end.

18. (New) The tripod according to claim 17 in which the head further comprises a ring nut mounted on the spherical element and such that, when the tripod is in the fully retracted condition, the ring nut is in abutment with the spider and the spherical element is housed inside the through-hole, the tripod further comprising a sleeve with a frustoconical opening, driven into the first end of the stem, the collet being housed inside the sleeve and cooperating with the frustoconical opening for the clamping of the spherical element.

19. (New) The tripod according to claim 17 in which:

the means for adjusting the orientation of the head comprises (a) a tie rod having first and second ends and being associated, via the first of its ends, with the collet in order, when tensioned, to lock the relative rotation of the spherical element inside the collet, and (b) a knob in abutment with the second end of the stem, the tie rod being disposed inside the stem and being connected, via the second of its ends, to the knob, for the adjustment of the tensioning of the tie rod, the knob having a female thread and the second end of the tie rod

being threaded to engage the female thread by screwing, so that rotation of the knob varies the tensioning of the tie rod and consequently the clamping of the collet onto the head, and (c) a guide bush driven into the second end of the stem, the tie rod being guided in the guide bush in a non-rotatable manner; and

the tripod further comprises axial preloading means provided on the tie rod, so that the tie rod is tensioned, even when the knob is fully slackened, ensuring a minimal clamping of the collet onto the spherical element, the preloading means comprising a spring interposed between the tie rod and the guide bush.

20. (New) The tripod according to claim 17 in which the appendage is formed integrally on a sleeve fitted firmly on the first section, each appendage being housed in a respective seat formed in the spider for the articulation of the leg, the appendage and the seat being provided with respective complementary restraining means for restraining axially the appendage, while allowing the appendage to rotate, in the seat.

21. (New) A tripod for supporting apparatus in general and, in particular, for optical or photographic apparatus, comprising:

a spider having a through-hole formed through the spider;

legs each articulated to the spider by a respective first section, a respective appendage projecting radially from an end of the first section, without occupying space inside the section, the appendage formed integrally on a sleeve fitted firmly on the first section, each appendage being housed in a respective seat formed in the spider for the articulation of the leg, the appendage and the seat being provided with respective complementary restraining means for restraining axially the appendage, while allowing the appendage to rotate, in the seat;

a pillar having a stem with first and second ends and being housed slidably with the stem in the through-hole formed through the spider;

means for locking the sliding of the pillar, the locking means including a brake acting on the pillar, the brake having an operating lever terminating in a cam-like eccentric element operating on a pad movable radially in a seat formed in the spider in a manner such that the pressure of the pad on the pillar is determined by the position of the operating lever;

a head adapted to receive the apparatus, the head being at least partially housed inside the through-hole when the tripod is in its fully retracted and most compact condition and the head having (a) a spherical element and a collet housed inside the stem in the region of the first end of the stem, the collet engaging the spherical element in order to clamp it selectively, relative to the stem, so that the head is connected to the first end of the stem, and (b) a ring nut mounted on the spherical element and such that, when the tripod is in the fully retracted condition, the ring nut is in abutment with the spider and the spherical element is housed inside the through-hole;

a sleeve with a frustoconical opening, driven into the first end of the stem, the collet being housed inside the sleeve and cooperating with the frustoconical opening for the clamping of the spherical element;

means for adjusting the orientation of the head, the adjustment means being fixed to the second end of the stem, axially remote from the first end, the adjustment means including (a) a tie rod having first and second ends and being associated, via the first of its ends, with the collet in order, when tensioned, to lock the relative rotation of the spherical element inside the collet, and (b) a knob in abutment with the second end of the stem, the tie rod being disposed inside the stem and being connected, via the second of its ends, to the knob, for the adjustment of the tensioning of the tie rod, the knob having a female thread and the second end of the tie rod being threaded to engage the female thread by screwing, so that rotation of the knob varies the tensioning of the tie rod and consequently the clamping of the collet onto the head, and (c) a guide bush driven into the second end of the stem, the tie rod being guided in the guide bush in a non-rotatable manner; and

axial preloading means provided on the tie rod, so that the tie rod is tensioned, even when the knob is fully slackened, ensuring a minimal clamping of the collet onto the spherical element, the preloading means comprising a spring interposed between the tie rod and the guide bush.